

VZCZCXRO9968
RR RUEH DU RUEH MR RUEH RN
DE RUEH SA #0418/01 0591621
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 281621Z FEB 08
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3627
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 2182
RUEHTN/AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN 5337
RUEH DU/AMCONSUL DURBAN 9603
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PRETORIA 000418

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/S E. BROWN, S. HILL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/19/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [SF](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: ZIMBABWEAN EXILES NCUBE AND MASIIYIWA UPBEAT ON
DEVELOPMENTS, ELECTIONS

REF: A. PRETORIA 139

[1](#)B. HARARE 130

[1](#)C. PRETORIA 348

PRETORIA 00000418 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: Ambassador Eric M. Bost. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. Prominent exiled Zimbabwean businessmen Trevor Ncube and Strive Masiyiwa agreed that the upcoming March 29 elections offered opportunities for political change in Zimbabwe, but differed on the electoral prospects for independent presidential candidate Simba Makoni. Ncube, a strong Makoni supporter, claimed that Makoni has generated significant excitement in Zimbabwe and would do well in the upcoming poll, whereas Masiyiwa questioned Makoni's organizational strength on the ground. Both believed that Makoni's candidacy has created sharp divisions in ZANU-PF, and that Makoni and Tsvangirai may still form a coalition before the election. Some key ZANU-PF officials who were involved in the rigging in previous elections now support Makoni, potentially making it harder -- but not impossible -- for Mugabe to steal the upcoming election. The MDC will attempt to combat rigging, but has not yet devised a plan for the "day after" in the event of a Mugabe victory. Masiyiwa expressed his growing concern about the spiraling inflation, suggesting that there may be "no more room" for the economy to collapse. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Visiting DAS Carol Thompson, AF/S Office Director, and PolOff met February 27 with prominent and influential Zimbabwean exile businessmen Strive Masiyiwa and Trevor Ncube. Harare Ambassador McGee joined the meeting with Masiyiwa. Ncube is publisher of the respected South African weekly newspaper the Mail & Guardian, as well as the Zimbabwean newspapers The Sunday Standard and The Zimbabwean Independent. Masiyiwa is founder and CEO of Econet Wireless Group, a global telecommunications company with operations in Zimbabwe and 14 other countries.

Prospects for Makoni Candidacy

[1](#)3. (C) A long-time advocate of a "third way" in Zimbabwe (ref A), Trevor Ncube expressed his enthusiastic support for the presidential candidacy of Simba Makoni (ref B). (NOTE: Ncube appears to be deeply involved in the Makoni campaign, and

even received a phone call from Makoni during the meeting. END NOTE.) Makoni has generated "tremendous excitement" on the ground in Zimbabwe, Ncube claimed, leading to an upsurge in voter registration. Makoni's biggest enemies are time and resources. Ncube said that the diaspora is helping to fund Makoni's campaign through a Johannesburg trust fund (Ncube offered to provide the account number to the USG for contributions, an offer we did not follow up on). Ncube suggested that Makoni is making inroads in Mashonaland East, where former General Solomon Mujuru has broad support, in Harare, and in Matabeleland, both urban and rural areas. This support would spread into other areas, Ncube believes.

¶4. (C) DAS Thompson stressed to Ncube that the United States does not support particular political parties in Zimbabwe, despite rumors that the USG backs the opposition MDC. Instead, the United States wants to see leaders with vision, who can create political and economic change in Zimbabwe and a better life for the Zimbabwean people. Ncube said he appreciated the message and would pass it to Makoni. Ncube appreciated the message and would pass it to Makoni. Ncube noted that any association between Makoni and the U.S. or U.K. would be the "political kiss of death," so urged the USG to speak carefully when commenting on the campaign.

¶5. (C) Strive Masiyiwa was much more cautious about the Makoni candidacy, questioning whether Makoni has support on the ground. He noted that Makoni does not have any "foot soldiers" to campaign for him, and thus limited ability to communicate with the man on the street, many of whom are deeply suspicious of Makoni due to his long association with President Mugabe and ZANU-PF. Both Masiyiwa and Ncube agreed that Makoni's candidacy has divided ZANU-PF, including the security structures. While no one knows the exact extent of the division, Ncube said it is "extensive." This division has created tension, distrust, and even paranoia within ZANU-PF.

PRETORIA 00000418 002.2 OF 003

Complicated Ties to Mujurus

¶6. (C) Ncube and Masiyiwa provided differing accounts of the relationship between Makoni and ZANU-PF heavyweight retired General Solomon Mujuru. Ncube claimed that Makoni decided to run for president without Mujuru's blessing. Now that Makoni is "gathering momentum," Mujuru has begun quietly supporting him, but many core Makoni supporters resent Mujuru's late conversion. Mujuru is a controversial figure in ZANU-PF and could even become a negative factor in the Makoni campaign.

¶7. (C) Masiyiwa, on the other hand, said that Mujuru and former Home Affairs Minister Dumisa Dabengwa created the "Makoni project" as a means to get rid of Mugabe. Dabengwa will publicly endorse Makoni in the coming days, which will be "symbolically powerful" and will bring the former ZAPU leadership firmly behind Makoni. Masiyiwa helped organize a meeting in Johannesburg between Dabengwa and MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai (ref C), a potentially important bridge between Makoni and the MDC. According to Masiyiwa, Mujuru will never publicly back Makoni. Mujuru is essentially a "mafia boss," and Mugabe could simply threaten to arrest Mujuru if he got out of line. Masiyiwa also questioned the conventional wisdom that Mujuru controls much of the military, noting that Mujuru has been out of uniform for some 16 years and may not have as much influence as experts believe.

Alliance between Tsvangirai and Makoni?

¶8. (C) Both Ncube and Masiyiwa believed it was still possible for Simba Makoni and Morgan Tsvangirai to form an alliance

before the presidential elections on March 29 -- or perhaps for a second round of elections if no one candidate receives 50 percent plus of the vote (a prospect both Ncube and Masiyiwa thought likely). Ncube, a harsh Tsvangirai critic, argued that the MDC-Tsvangirai has been "seriously weakened" by its failure to reunite with the MDC-Mutambara faction, and that Tsvangirai has no more than 20 percent support in the country. Tsvangirai is under significant pressure, even "rebellion," from within his own party. Masiyiwa said that both Makoni and Tsvangirai are still sizing up their support, but at the appropriate time in the next couple weeks, he expected -- and would in fact help ensure -- that the two would meet and discuss forming a coalition. Masiyiwa floated the idea of Makoni serving as Prime Minister and head of government, while Tsvangirai would become president and head of state.

Rigged Election?

¶9. (C) Asked about the possibility that Mugabe would rig the election to ensure he received 51 percent of the vote, Ncube and Masiyiwa noted that the "people who did the rigging last time" are now divided between Mugabe and Makoni (Masiyiwa even joked that one CIO contact expressed concern that Makoni could steal the election from Mugabe!). Ncube said you cannot rule out the impact of fear and intimidation from Mugabe's thugs, but that there were "competing forces at work." Blatant rigging might not be accepted by the young people, Ncube observed, noting that many youth were frustrated when they were unable to register to vote. Qfrustrated when they were unable to register to vote. Masiyiwa is helping the MDC set up an "anti-rigging unit" that hopefully will help reduce the amount of electoral theft.

¶10. (C) The MDC does not have a clear plan for the "day after" the election, Masiyiwa said. The party is beginning to hold those discussions, but remains committed to non-violence. Tsvangirai is concerned that post-electoral protests could spin out of control. Masiyiwa has recommended to the MDC that they view the election as part of the process of de-legitimizing Mugabe -- shrinking his international support base to a couple countries in the region like Namibia and Angola. Masiyiwa wants as many regional observers and journalists as possible in Zimbabwe to witness the election. He and others are urging the South African Communist Party (SACP) and trade union federation COSATU -- both sympathetic

PRETORIA 00000418 003.2 OF 003

to the MDC -- to send observers through the ANC and South African Government delegations.

Economic Crisis

¶11. (C) Concluding, Masiyiwa expressed concern about spiraling inflation and economic meltdown in Zimbabwe. Mugabe is continuing to print and spend money in advance of the election, creating a "roaring monster." "We have talked about the economy" for a long time, Masiyiwa said, but this time there "may be no more room" for collapse.

Comment

¶12. (C) Simba Makoni's presidential bid has created excitement among the well-educated Zimbabwean diaspora in South Africa. Many, like Trevor Ncube, are supporting Makoni and are likely contributing resources to his campaign. A significant number of the elite and successful Zimbabweans dismiss Morgan Tsvangirai as ineffective, uneducated and incapable of ruling Zimbabwe, and see Makoni as the best hope for change in Zimbabwe. Others, like Strive Masiyiwa,

continue to back the MDC and Tsvangirai, and Tsvangirai retains strong support among the working class and poor Zimbabwean exiles in South Africa. We expect few Zimbabweans living in South Africa, estimated between one to three million, will return to Zimbabwe to vote in the March 29 elections, although their financial resources, international connections, and ties to family members may make them an influential factor in Zimbabwean politics.

BOST